



PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact Public Affairs

SANDY RAYNOR

Telephone: (602) 514-7625

Cell: (602) 525-2681

MEXICAN CITIZEN SENTENCED TO 2 YEARS IN PRISON FOR HIS ROLE IN SMUGGLING UNDOCUMENTED INFANT

TUCSON, Ariz. – Victor Alejandro Galaz-Chanez, DOB 3/28/84, of Sonora, Mexico, was sentenced today to 24 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, by U.S. District Judge David C. Bury in Tucson, Ariz.

On March 10, 2004, a Border Patrol agent encountered a young Mexican female citizen who claimed that her 1-year-old baby girl had been kidnaped by an alien smuggler. A multi-agency search for the smuggler and her child was initiated which included an Amber Alert. The mother claimed that an unknown person had abducted her child from her arms at the border late at night. She stated that soon after her child was abducted, a group of unknown border bandits on the Mexican side assaulted and robbed her. During this unrelated assault, one of the assailants punched her while holding a knife in his hand. Her lower lip was nearly severed and required plastic surgery. The child's father, residing in Ohio, was contacted by agents as well as by a co-conspirator in the case. The father was told by the agents that the child was missing and that the mother was assaulted and was in the hospital. The co-conspirator smuggler informed the father that the child was safe in Douglas and that the child would be delivered to him for a fee of \$500. An all-out effort by law enforcement agents resulted in the father being flown from Ohio to Arizona to retrieve his child. All along, the father was given telephonic instructions by the unknown co-conspirator as to where to meet co-conspirators who would return the child to him. Initially, the child was going to be

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taken to the father in Ohio by the smugglers. The plan changed, however, and the father was told to meet a smuggler at a hotel in Douglas, Arizona. He was told that the child would be given to him at that time.

On March 11, 2004, while the baby's father was at a hotel in Douglas waiting for the co-conspirators to deliver his child to him, Galaz-Chanez (along with his brother Miguel Galaz-Chanez) arrived in a vehicle and met with the father. Numerous undercover agents maintained surveillance of the area. Victor Galaz-Chanez told the father that he would take the father to where the child was harbored. Agents arrested the Galaz-Chanez brothers. Victor Galaz-Chanez took the agents to the house where the baby was kept. A third co-defendant, Jose Luis Cervantes-Carlos, was arrested at the house after agents found him holding the baby. The child was unharmed and was reunited with her parents.

Upon arrest, Victor Galaz-Chanez told agents that he was instructed by an unindicted co-conspirator in Mexico, to pick up the baby's father at the hotel and take the man to his baby.

The baby's mother later told authorities that her husband had made arrangements for her and her baby to be smuggled into the United States and be transported to Ohio to join him. She said that she was in the process of being smuggled into the United States and had handed her child to the alien smuggler guide at the border when she was attacked by unknown border bandits. During the assault, the alien smuggler guide and another male, who was also being smuggled into the U.S., ran from the scene, taking her baby with them. After the attack, the woman crossed into the U.S. and could not find the guide, the illegal alien nor her baby. She sought help from a border patrol agent.

Victor Galaz-Chanez pleaded guilty on August 10, 2004, to Conspiracy to Transport An Illegal Alien for the Purpose of Commercial Advantage or Private Financial Gain in violation of Title 8 U.S.C. Sections 1324(a)(1)(A)(v)(I), (a)(1)(A)(ii) and (a)(1)(B)(i). The two co-defendants also pleaded guilty and are pending sentencing on December 9, 2004.

The investigation in this case was conducted by agents from ICE, Border Patrol in Douglas, Ariz., and the Douglas Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Raquel Arellano, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-00799-003-TUC-DCB (NFF)
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